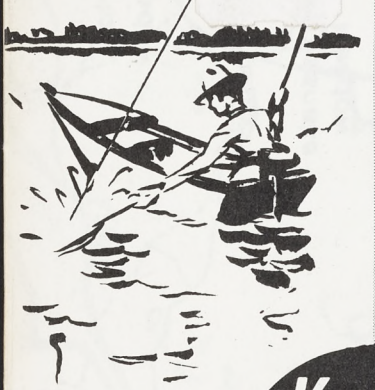
MAP OF

KERN RIVER
LAKE ISABELLA
KERNVILLE
WOFFORD·HEIGHTS

CALIFORNIA

25c

B 27
Sporting Goods
$ .21



- Launching facilities
- Dockage
- Boat landings
- Bait
- Water ski areas
- Fishing information
- Hiking
- Hunting
- Winter sports

Kym's GUIDE No. 11

MAPS and CHARTS of Recreation Areas

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KERN PLATEAU WILDERNESS AREA

KERNVILLE

TULARE CO. KERN

RIVER KERN

KERN RIVER

ISABELLA LAKE

LAKE ISABELLA

KERNVILLE AIRPORT
El. 2635 ft.
Black Top Runway 4200 ft.

WOFFORD HEIGHTS

Johnsondale
Capitol Rock 5885
Table Mtn.
Long Mdw.
REDWOOD MDW GROVE 6372
Parker Meadow Cr.
South Fork Kern
Durrwood Meadows
Round Meadow
Mosquito Mdw.
Sirretta Meadows
Deadwood Mdw.
Poison Meadow
Cherry Hill 8812
Sirretta
Machi
Boon Mdw
Double Bunk Mdw.
Bear Mdw.
French Joe Mdw
PACKSADDLE GROVE
Packsaddle Canyon
Pack Saddle Cave
McNally's
FAIRVIEW GS
ROADS END PO
upper Camp
FAIRVIEW
lower Camp
LIMESTONE CLIFF CAMP
INTAKE
Burnt Ridge 7933
Spears Cr.
Flynn Cr.
Salmon Falls
Salmon
HORSE MEADOW
GOLD LEDGE CAMP
Gold Ledge Cr.
Ant Canyon
Pup Mdw.
Sand Flat
Vincent Mdw.
Scraper Davis Cr.
Tobias
DEER CR MILL GROVE
FROG MEADOW
Dunlap Meadow
Baker Mdw
Baker Pt
Tobias Pk 8503
Bull Run Pass
Dry Meadow
Tyler Mdw
SUGARLOAF MTN.
Spear Mdw
PANORAMA CAMP
Deep Creek Cave
YMCA CAMP
Peel Pk
Portuguese Pass
Bull Run Basin
Stormy Canyon
Dark Canyon
Chico Can
CAMP 3
HEADQUARTERS CAMP
Pinnell
Tunnel Spr.
Sunday Pk (TOBIAS PK. C.G.)
TIGER FLAT CAMP
BLACK SAMBO MINE
Calf Cr.
Bohna Pk.
CEDAR CR CAMP
Stick Rock Cr.
GREENHORN MOUNTAIN CAMP
GREENHORN SUMMIT
Ski Lift
Elevation 7100 ft.
ALT SIERRA
ALDER CR CAMP
Alder Cr.
Shirley Cr.
SHIRLEY MDW CAMP
Cooks Pk.
Red Mtn.
Split Mtn.
U.S. FOREST SERVICE RANGER STATION
Black Mtn
Cane Spring
Cane Cr.
GOLF COURSE
Noyer Can
Hot Springs
Cane Pk.
Big Blue
Tillie Cr.
Shirley Cr.
Alder Cr.
Canyon
Cyrus Canyon
Cannell Pk.
Cannell Meadow
Long Meadow
Taylor Meadow
Rattlesnake Meadow
True Meadow
Pine Flat
Little Cannell Meadow
Cane Meadow
Bartolas
Bartolas Spr.
Country
Fay
FAY RANCH
Pilot Knob
Church Dome 8501
Black Mtn.
Taylor Cr.
Bartolas Cr.
CAMP OWENS
CAMP GILBERT
CAMP JAMES
POTATO PATCH Cr.
Caldwell Cr.
Short Can.
Big Meadow
Cannell Meadow
Tunnel Spr.
Fay
Rattlesnake Cr.
LIVE OAK
SCOTTY'S MARINA
BOAT LAUNCHING
HUNGRY GULCH
BOULDER GULCH
TILLY CREEK
ROCKY POINT
Private property
FISHERMANS ACCESS ROAD
ISABELLA MARINA NO. 2
FRENCH GULCH
CONTROL TOWER-BOAT PERMITS
Ski Area
MARINA
KERN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION AREA
SOUTH FORK
KISSACK BAY
ISABELLA MARINA
PIONEER
MAIN DAM
PARADISE COVE
OBSERVATION POINT
CAMPGROUND NO. 9
Rattlesnake Cr.
Stormy Canyon
Dark Canyon
Chico Can
Tunnel Spr.
Cow Cr.
Calf Cr.
Split Mtn.
Noyer Can
Cane Spring
Cane Cr.
Shirley Cr.
Tillie Cr.
Alder Cr.
Cyrus Canyon
Caldwell Cr.
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Bartolas
Bartolas Spr.
Country
Fay

KERN RIVER ISABELLA LAKE

by
NORMAN PHILLIPS

There can be no question but that the Kernville-Lake Isabella recreation area is one of the finest in the West. A huge lake, nestled in rolling hills alternating with rugged mountains, fed by a beautiful river, provides top outdoor sport of all varieties. Hunting, fishing, boating, skiing, hiking, mountain climbing — even snow sports in winter are available in this area.

Enhancing these natural attributes is the fact that the area is marvelously well developed with every conceivable comfort. The key to this is that the area is new, so all of the facilities are new also. When the U.S. Corps of Engineers constructed the two flood control dams which back up the formerly disorderly waters of the Kern River to form Lake Isabella, the old town of Kernville and small surrounding ranches were flooded. Everything had to be evacuated, so a new town was built on higher ground. New resorts, hotels, and motels sprang up, and facilities today can be rated among the finest and most modern in the West.

The Kern River takes its source on the slopes of Mt. Whitney and flows through the Kern Plateau, home of the famous Golden Trout, down the canyons and into the basin where Lake Isabella lies. The lake thus formed is a huge one; the largest in Southern California and one of the largest in the west. Maximum capacity is a whopping 570,000 acre feet. Even if every bit of water were to be let out for flood control purposes, a lake of 30,000 acre feet would remain below the lowest point of the spillways. Usually the lake fluctuates between 80,000 a. f. and perhaps 250,000 a. f., making a body of water so large that even at the height of the vacation season it is never crowded.

Water released from the dam forms the lower Kern and flows westward toward Bakersfield. Highway 178, known locally as Canyon Road, parallels the river and is one of the most beautiful mountain drives in the west.

The Kernville-Isabella area lies on the southern border of Sequoia National Forest and might be called the "Gateway to Sequoia". The road stretching up toward Johnsondale points in this direction and if it were pushed though a few more miles, would form a direct connection with the National Forests of Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant.

Kernville-Isabella is a 12 month a year playground. Temperatures in the height of summer rise to a tops of 100°, with the average probably closer to 90°. The extreme dryness and lack of humidity make such temperatures not only bearable but pleasant. In the wintertime, during a cold snap, it seldom goes much below the frost point in the lower elevations, where Kernville, Wofford Heights, and the lake are located. Only rarely, perhaps every dozen years or so, does any snow fall in the elevations of the lake or the surrounding towns and developments.

In the high mountains immediately behind these areas, however, snow often piles deeply. Greenhorn Mountain, for instance, only a few miles drive from Wofford Heights, has excellent ski facilities.

HISTORY

The Kern River Valley is one of the historic spots of the old West. Local legend has it that one Adam Hamilton was the founding father of Kernville. Arriving in the 1850's, just after one Lovely Rogers had made a gold strike and filed a claim, Adam had a starting point for a career; a barrel of whiskey tied onto a mule. The center of the new goldfield was named Quartzberg and Adam put a plank across two tree stumps, rolled out the barrel, and opened a saloon.

Righteous city fathers soon made him plug the barrel, tie it on the mule, and chased him out of camp to a large flat below town. Here he set up shop again and the miners came to enjoy his wares, soon naming the place Whiskey Flat. It carried this name for years and only much later was the name dropped in favor of the more dignified cognomen of Kernville.

The panorama of the west that has become the staple of TV fare was played out through this Valley. Sodbusters, cattle barons, miners and sheepherders staged bloody brawls. It was the beginning of the trail to the Mother Lode Country and the 49'ers headed for Sutter's Mill and later for the Dawson trail, trod these Valleys up through Walker Pass and over the Greenhorns. That's how the latter got their name. Many an eastern tenderfoot was only a greenhorn when he hit them. If he lived to reach the other end of the trail they would make a checkako out of him.

Several books could be written about the colorful past of the Kern River Valley, so all we can indicate here is that the lore exists. Unfortunately, historians have not spent the time digging out the facts as they have in the case of Death Valley, Virginia City, Calaveras County, and the other more famous western haunts of bad men and cattle barons.

ACCESS

The area is reached by fine paved roads from both the east and the west. The shortest route from the Los Angeles area is north on Highway 99, turn off at Wheeler Ridge to Lamont to Highway 178, through the beautifully scenic Kern River Canyon.

The route from the east is Walker Pass, turning off Highway 6 approximately 45 miles north of Mojave. A winding road, paved two lanes wide, leads over gentle grades to the lake. The Weldon cut-off immediately past the town of that name leads around the lake to Kernville. Keeping left, stay on Highway 178 and circle the south shore.

Both routes are, of course, fine paved highways that can be traversed at any period of the year.

Miracle Hot Springs in scenic Kern River Canyon, Route 179, a well-known spa, has mineral baths and health treatments. Located in the Sequoia National Forest 38 miles east of Bakersfield, Miracle Hot Springs is a fishing as well as health resort, with complete facilities—hotel, cabins, store, restaurant. Free campground and trailer park is also located here.

From Kernville, a good paved road runs for miles along the east bank of the Kern River, going all the way to Johnsondale. Highway 190 has been extended and the road north of Johnsondale paved so you may now drive to Porterville via this route through the Sequoia National Park, and the Kern Plateau area.

Another stretch of paved road runs from Kernville to the community of Lake Isabella, by way of Wofford Heights. Thus, it is possible to drive clear around the lake shore, within view of the water all the way. It is a beautiful drive at any time of the year and visitors should plan on making the complete circumnavigation of the lake, no matter what else they do during their stay.

FISHING

It is impossible to over-emphasize just how good the fishing is in this area. Trout, bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, all abound.

Discussing trout first, the Kern River in its higher elevations abounds in the choice golden, a trophy fish if there ever were one. Living only in elevations of 10,000 feet and higher, a number of pack stations in the area will take the angler in for the day, for over-night camping, or longer.

Rainbows are found in the Kern River in its lower elevations, both above and below the lake. Approximately 60 miles of this river is available by car, all of it heavily planted by the California Department of Fish and Game. The Department maintains a trout hatchery a mile or two above Kernville, where visitors are welcome to see the process of hatching and rearing trout. These are the rainbows that are planted in the river and its tributaries, where the fishing season coincides with the High Sierra dates; approximately, from the beginning of May to the end of October each year.

In addition, good catches of rainbows can be expected from Isabella Lake for at least the next few years. A disastrous flood in February of 1963 washed out the entire trout hatchery, carrying all of its stock of 250,000 fingerlings down into the lake. Many were killed by silt and the scouring action, but many survived. They and their descendants will provide good trout fishing in the lake while they last.

Usual trout techniques should be followed when fishing the river. Single salmon eggs on small hooks, a gold #14 or smaller and with one or two split shot pinched on to the leader about 24" above the hook, is a popular rig. Working down the bank to the edge of a pool, the egg should be popped lightly into a riffle at the head of the pool and allowed to drift into it and sink to the bottom. Make the action of the water move the egg in and out, and you'll catch fish.

Spinners and wobbling lures are also very popular. A small, ¼ ounce Hot Shot Wobbler, a Super Duper in the same size, or an F7 Flatfish can be a real killer. Cast out and across the stream, up the current at about a 45° angle, let the lure sink, and retrieve just briskly enough to keep the lure from hanging upon the bottom. Big trout are taken this way.

And we do mean big. Although most of the trout in the stream are planted, many of them become "holdovers"; plants that fail to be caught in their first season and may linger behind for two or three years. By then they will be five or six pounds in weight; real trophy fish for what is after all road-side angling. During late summer, trout 18 inches in length and a pound or two in weight are taken often enough that they cause no comment.

Trout fishing in the lake is best done with a sliding sinker on the line, with a split shot pinched on 24" above the hook to keep it from going any closer to the hook than that. Bait up with a single salmon egg, cast out, and let it sink to the bottom. Then, retrieve very slowly, giving the rod tip a slight twitch or two. Idea is to keep the egg moving very slowly, but with a taut line so the angler can set the hook at the first touch of a trout. The sliding sinker permits the fish to be felt before he has pulled long enough to lift the sliding sinker.

Crappie and bluegill are found most frequently in among the dead trees which dot the lake. When old Kernville and its ranches were flooded, the huge trees were left sticking up through the water. It will be years before they all rot away. They are the haunt of these delightful and sporting panfish.

Best bait here is live grubs such as "Li-Cuts", worms, larve, yellow or white streamer feathers, and "Go-Getters". Live bait is not permitted to be used in Isabella, but by "live bait" is meant minnows, water dogs, salamanders, and mudsuckers. Even though grubs and garden worms are technically "alive", they do not come under this ban. However, woe be to the angler caught with a minnow or a goldfish in his possession! A stiff fine or worse is in prospect.

Best method of angling for panfish is to prod in among the trees by boat, lowering a bait to the bottom or sinking a crappie feather and retrieving it with short, sharp flips of the wrist. If this doesn't produce action in 15 or 20 minutes, cast loose and try another spot. Panfish lie in schools in holes on the bottom and the most productive technique is to keep bunting until you locate such a school. When you do, it is no trick at all to take a hundred or so in an hour.

Bass follow their usual pattern of going deep during the winter months and being responsive only to wobbling lures fished right on the bottom. At this time artificial plastic mudsuckers, trolled slowly with weight to make them bounce over the bottom, frequently pay off. So do black plastic eels, fished in the same manner.

When the spring spawn starts, the bass move from deep holes onto shallow gravel banks to build nests and at this time they hit viciously at surface plugs tossed their way. After the young hatch, trolling back and forth over the channels where the gravel ridges drop off into deep water will produce strikes.

Bass run big in Isabella. One and two pounders are average, and during the best part of the season, from April through September, few indeed are the strings that don't contain several five pounders in them.

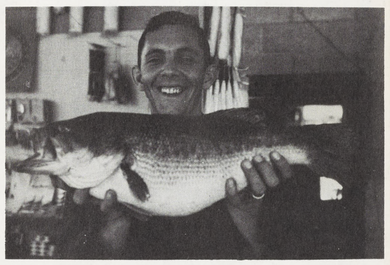
Catfish often are taken as large as 15 and 20 pounds, with the great mass of them running two or three pounds. Usual catfishing techniques should be followed; liver bait, a big gob of worms, "stink" baits, or fresh shrimp all produce results.

Sporting as they all are on hook and line, all of these Isabella and Kern River varieties are even better in a hot skillet and on the table. Since both river and lake are composed of clear, cold mountain water, the fish from them have a flavor that is out of this world.

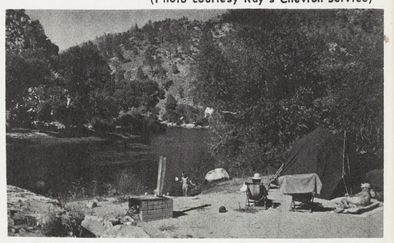
Hunting in the Kern River Valley.

ISABELLA MARINAS, on Isabella Lake, P.O. Box 854, Isabella Lake, California. Phone Drexel 9-8154 for boat reservations. Joe Swartz, manager. Marinas are located near French Gulch and in the South Fork. Complete outboard motor repair service. Modern fueling facility for inboard and outboard. Boat and motor rentals, daily, half day, and hourly rates. Mooring facilities.

Rex Harrison, and Georgia and Bill Doran, all of Palos Verdes Estates, display their catch at Scotty's Marina



Clay Ellis of Lake Isabella, with 9 pound 3 ounce bass. (Photo courtesy Ray's Chevron Service)



Camping along the Kern River, near Miracle Hot Springs.

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MAPS and CHARTS of Recreation Areas

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The October Art Festival in Kernville, draws artists and visitors from all over California.

HUNTING

Game in the area includes quail, cukar partridge, dove, cottontail and brush rabbit, deer, bear, plus ducks and geese in season. In addition, local sportsmen's groups raise and plant ringneck pheasant for public shooting during the state's season in November. And, if you have a good pack of dogs, you can even put up a mountain lion or a bobcat if you are experienced in this type of hunting.

Deer are found around in the hills back of town and from there all the way up through the neighboring Sierras. Many fine bucks are taken each year from the slopes of the Greenhorn Mountains. Pack stations in the area will take hunting parties in, supply a guide, and pack the nimrod's meat out when he is finished. It is also possible to hunt without packing in. Dirt roads and trails lead back from the lake and the hunter can get into deer country by car and foot alone. Permission should be obtained from the owner before hunting on private property, but there is much open, unposted government land that can be hunted, with good access by dirt road and trail.

Bear must be hunted with a pack of hounds who know their business. Only once in a long while will a hunter see one without a pack to put it up for him. Guides can be hired who have such packs, however, and several of them do business on a money-back basis; no bear, no fee.

Upland game is plentiful. Quail of the mountain variety is found on the brushy hillsides back from the lake, especially on the southern shore. Valley birds inhabit the brushy areas all around the lake, and in the undeveloped land along the south fork of the Kern near Weldon and Onyx.

Dove, like other migratory birds, may be here today and gone tomorrow. These swift-winger speedsters hang around until the first cold night or two, then take off for southern climates. If hot weather holds through the opening day of the season, which is usually September 1, fabulous shooting can be had. If a cold snap hits first, they are off and gone and the season is a dud.

A recent introduction of the Fish and Game Department is the chukar partridge. This choice bird, a big handsome devil and a magnificent target, has multiplied rapidly and huge flocks of them now surround the lake. Only the chukar is among the world's most wiley birds, inhabiting only the most barren, rockiest, steepest, most inaccessible hillsides.

The best way to hunt chukar is to pick the steepest, worst looking, dryest, highest, most barren mountain in sight. Never mind the pretty, green, brushy ones; chukar are never found there. Having found such a rock pile, climb it until your heart and lungs burst and you are ready to drop with exhaustion. You are now in excellent chukar country.

Few of these birds are taken each season, although there are hundreds of thousands of them around the lake. Hunt them yourself and you will know why.

Cottontail and brush rabbit will be found just after daybreak alongside of the brush piles that border the ranches and cultivated fields as well as in the foothills back from the lake. They are delicious eating, with none of the sage flavor found in the rabbits from the desert areas further south.

WATER SPORTS

Boats must be 12 feet in length or longer. There is no maximum size limit, and launching facilities can handle a pretty good sized craft. There is no speed limit on the lake, but water skiing is permitted only in certain designated areas.

There are two excellent marinas on opposite sides of the lake, with full dockage and haul-out facilities, slips available for rent, and mechanics to handle hull and motor repairs. They also have boat and motor franchises and can sell you a new rig or any part thereof.

Just as is true of any other mountain lake, or of the ocean, Isabella can kick up into nasty chop. It is not a "dangerous" lake for any boater who uses common sense and heads for shore when the rollers get higher than his boat can handle. The main channels are snag free, but the boater who gets to prodding around in the back coves should keep a good lookout forward. Caution is indicated when water levels are low, or when prowling among the trees and snags of old Kernville after crappie and bluegill.

Several speedboat clubs hold regattas on the lake and water-ski competitions are also held regularly.

OTHER RECREATIONS

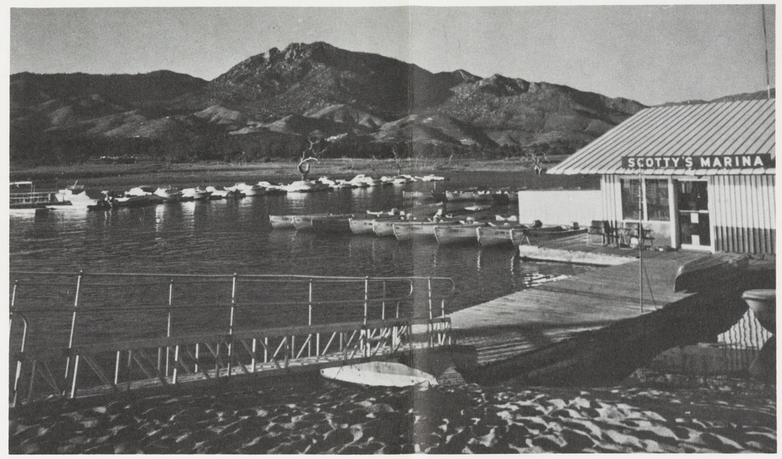
Kern River Valley offers much in the line of other sports. A golf course is currently in operation and open to the public. The host at your hotel will make reservations.

Rockhounds will find the area fascinating. Practically every type of mineral and geologic formation in the book can be discovered. The hills also have many Indian artifacts still left to be found. The district was the home of many tribes from time immemorial and rubbing rocks, stone implements, and even occasional shards may be found. Once in a while someone discovers a fine metate and pestle.

Hiking and horseback riding are not just a sport here; they are a way of life. Horses may be rented from a number of stables and pack stations.

The camera fan could spend the rest of his life here and never run out of subject matter. Sunrises and sunsets, wildflowers in bloom, action shots of speed boats; the subjects are as varied as the West itself. Best times of day for the color slide fan to make his exposures are from sunrise to about 9 a.m. and from 4 p.m. until sunset. The low angle of the sun at these times gives good shadow detail, the richest color rendering, and the best modeling.

During the winter, snow fans can drive a few miles over a fine paved road to the Greenhorn Mountain snow facilities. Three free rope tows await them, operated without charge by the Kern County Parks Department. Two of them are 1,200 feet long with 500 foot drop, while the bunny tow is 300 feet long with only a 60 foot drop. Ski equipment and toboggans may be rented at Greenhorn Summit.



SCOTTY'S MARINA, on Isabella Lake, P.O. Box 127, Wofford Heights, California. Located one mile south of Wofford Heights, turn in at Tillie Creek Camp. Johnson Motor sales and service, marine supplies, tackle, bait, sporting goods, supplies. Boat and motor rentals, hourly, half day, and all day rates. Weekly rates after 3 days. Slips, fuel and complete marina service. Phone Drexel 6-2525 for reservations and information.

Flying clubs find the Kern River Valley an ideal place for weekend fly-ins. A paved airstrip is maintained by the county on the east side of the north fork of the lake. Elevation is 2,635 feet, while the landing strip is 4,200 feet long. Inform the operator of the hotel where you make reservations that you will be flying in, and they will send transportation to meet you. Tie-down facilities are available at the field, but there are no landing lights so plan for a daylight arrival.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Living facilities range from public campgrounds to the finest of housekeeping apartments. There are approximately 30 campgrounds surrounding the lake and along the river, and more are under construction. Most of them have running water, toilets, barbecue pits, and tables. Picnic areas are also maintained where overnight camping is not permitted.

Next come the privately-owned trailer parks, with about seven of them currently in operation. Travel trailers and camper topped trucks may stop here by the night, week, month, or year. Many city dwellers buy a comfortable trailer, lease a space by the year, and have a cabin for week-ends in Kern River Valley at a minimum of expense.

There are about twenty motels, hotels, and guest ranches around the lake and along the Kern River with rates running from $5.00 to $20.00 per day, with the latter figure usually including a fully equipped kitchen, sitting room, and swimming pool on the premises. Reservations are available during the season, which runs roughly from April through late September. It is also advisable to have reservations for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, when it is often crowded.

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L.A. Area: 213 367-8941 Kernville: 376-2541

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Hot Mineral Baths—Expert Massage
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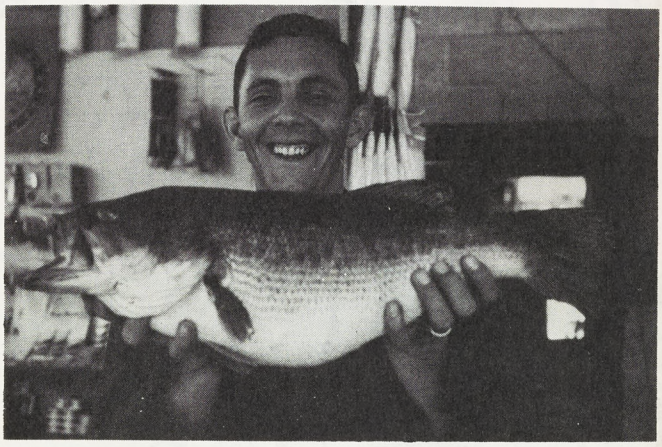
Rex Harrison, and Georgia and Bill Doran, all of Palos Verdes Estates, display their catch at Scotty's Marina



Clay Ellis of Lake Isabella, with 9 pound 3 ounce bass.
(Photo courtesy Ray's Chevron Service)

Camping along the Kern River, near Miracle Hot Springs.

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